

Sec'y Lansing Leaves Cabinet

The following letters exchanged between President Wilson and Secretary of State Lansing are self explanatory:

The White House.

Washington, 7 Feb., 1920.

My Dear Mr. Secretary:

Is it true, as I have been told, that during my illness you have frequently called the heads of the executive departments of the Government into conference? If it is, I feel it my duty to call your attention to considerations which I do not care to dwell upon until I learn from you yourself that this is the fact. Under our constitutional law and practice, as developed hitherto, no one but the President has the right to summon the heads of the executive departments into conference, and no one but the President and the Congress has the right to ask their views or the views of any one of them on any public question.

I take this matter up with you because in the development of every constitutional system, custom and precedent are of the most serious consequence, and I think we will all agree in desiring not to lead in any wrong direction. I have therefore taken the liberty of writing you to ask you this question, and I am sure you will be glad to answer.

I am happy to learn from your recent note to Mrs. Wilson that your strength is returning. Cordially and sincerely, yours,

WOODROW WILSON.

Hon. Robert Lansing, Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State,

Washington, Feb. 9, 1920.

My Dear Mr. President:

It is true that frequently during your illness I requested the heads of the executive departments of the Government to meet for informal conference.

Shortly after you were taken ill in October certain members of the Cabinet, of which I was one, felt that in view of the fact that we were denied communication with you it was wise for us to confer informally together on interdepartmental matters and matters as to which action could not be postponed until your medical advisers permitted you to pass upon them.

Accordingly I, as the ranking member, requested the members of the Cabinet to assemble for such informal conference; and in view of the mutual benefit derived the practice was continued. I can assure you that it never for a moment entered my mind that I was acting unconstitutionally or contrary to your wishes, and there certainly was no intention on my part to assume powers and exercise functions which under the Constitution are exclusively confided to the President.

During these troublous times, when many difficult and vexatious questions have arisen and when in the circumstances I have been deprived of your guidance and direction, it has been my constant endeavor to carry out your policies as I understood them and to act in all matters as I believed you would wish me to act.

If, however, you think that I have failed in my loyalty to you and if you no longer have confidence in me and prefer to have another conduct our foreign affairs, I am, of course, ready, Mr. President, to relieve you any embarrassment by placing my resignation in your hands. I am, as always, faithfully, yours,

ROBERT LANSING.

The White House,

Washington, Feb. 11, 1920.

My Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am very much disappointed by your letter of February 9 in reply to mine asking about the so-called Cabinet meetings. You kindly explain the motives of these meetings, and I find nothing in your letter which justifies your assumption of presidential authority in such a matter. You say you "felt that, in view of the fact that you were denied communication with me, it was wise to confer informally together on interdepartmental matters and matters as to which action could not be postponed until my medical advisers permitted me" to be seen and consulted, but I have to remind you, Mr. Secretary, that no action could be taken without me by the Cabinet, and therefore there could have been no disadvantage in awaiting action with regard to

matters concerning which action could not have been taken without me.

This affair, Mr. Secretary, only deepens a feeling that was growing upon me. While we were still in Paris I felt, and have felt increasingly ever since, that you accepted my guidance and direction on questions with regard to which I had to instruct you only with increasing reluctance, and since my return to Washington I have been struck by the number of matters in which you have apparently tried to forestall my judgment by formulating action and merely asking my approval when it was impossible for me to form an independent judgment, because I had not had an opportunity to examine the circumstances with any degree of independence.

I therefore feel that I must frankly take advantage of your kind suggestion that if I should prefer to have another to conduct our foreign affairs you are ready to relieve me of any embarrassment by placing your resignation in my hands, for I must say that it would relieve me of embarrassment, Mr. Secretary, the embarrassment of feeling your reluctance and divergence of judgment, if you would give your present office up and afford me an opportunity to select some one whose mind would more willingly go along with mine.

I need not tell you with what reluctance I take advantage of your suggestion, or that I do so with the kindest feeling. In matters of transcendent importance like this the only wise course is a course of perfect candor, where personal feeling is as much as possible left out of the reckoning. Very sincerely, yours,

WOODROW WILSON.

Hon. Robert Lansing, Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State,

Washington, Feb. 12, 1920.

My Dear Mr. President:

I wish to thank you sincerely for your candid letter of the 11th, in which you state that my resignation would be acceptable to you, since it relieves me of the responsibility for action which I have been contemplating and which I can now take without hesitation, as it meets your wishes.

I have the honor, therefore, to tender you my resignation as Secretary of State, the same to take effect at your convenience.

In thus severing our official association I feel, Mr. President, that I should make the following statement, which I had prepared recently and which will show you that I have not been unmindful that the continuance of our present relations was impossible and that I realized that it was clearly my duty to bring them to an end at the earliest moment compatible with the public interest.

Ever since January, 1919, I have been conscious of the fact that you no longer were disposed to welcome my advice in matters pertaining to the negotiations in Paris, to our foreign service, or to international affairs in general.

Holding these views, I would, if I had consulted my personal inclination alone have resigned as Secretary of State and as a commissioner to negotiate peace. I felt, however, that such a step might have been misinterpreted, both at home and abroad, and that it was my duty to cause you no embarrassment in carrying forward the great task in which you were then engaged.

Possibly I erred in this, but if I did it was with the best of motives.

When I returned to Washington in the latter part of July, 1919, my personal wish to resign had not changed, but again I felt that loyalty to you and my duty to the administration compelled me to defer action as my resignation might have been misconstrued into hostility to the ratification of the treaty of peace or at least, into disapproval of your views as to the form of ratification. I therefore remained silent, avoiding any comment on the frequent reports that we were not in full agreement. Subsequently, your serious illness, during which I have never seen you, imposed upon me the duty—at least, I construed it to be my duty—to remain in charge of the Department of State until your health permitted you to assume again full direction of foreign affairs.

Believing that that time had arrived, I had prepared my resignation when my only doubt as to the propriety of placing it in your hands was removed by your letter indicating that it would be entirely acceptable to you.

I think, Mr. President, in accordance with the frankness which has marked this correspondence not permit to pass unchallenged the imputation and for which I am grateful to you, that I can that in calling into informal conference the

heads of the executive departments I sought to usurp your presidential authority. I had no such intention, no such thought.

I believed then and I believe now that the conferences which were held were for the best interests of your administration and of the Republic, and that belief was shared by others whom I consulted. I further believe that the conferences were proper and necessary in the circumstances, and that I would have been derelict in my duty if I had failed to act as I did.

I also feel, Mr. President, that candor compels me to say that I can not agree with your statement that I have tried to forestall your judgment in certain cases by formulating action and merely asking your approval when it was impossible for you to form an independent judgment because you had not had an opportunity to examine the circumstances with any degree of independence. I have, it is true, when I thought a case demanded immediate action, advised you what, in my opinion, that action should be, stating at the same the reasons on which my opinion was based.

This I conceived to be a function of the Secretary of State, and I have followed the practice for the past four years and a half. I confess that I have been surprised and disappointed at the frequent disapproval of my suggestions, but have never failed to follow your decisions, however difficult it made the conduct of our foreign affairs.

I need hardly add that I leave the office of Secretary of State with only good will toward you, Mr. President, and with a sense of profound relief.

Forgetting our differences and remembering only your many kindnesses in the past, I have the honor to be, Mr. President, Sincerely, yours,

ROBERT LANSING.

The President, The White House.

The White House,

Washington, Feb. 13, 1920.

My Dear Mr. Secretary:

Allow me to acknowledge with appreciation your letter of February 12. It now being evident, Mr. Secretary, that we have both of us felt the embarrassment of our recent relations with each other, I feel it my duty to accept your resignation, to take effect at once, at the same time adding that I hope that the future holds for you many successes of the most gratifying sort. My best wishes will always follow you, and it will be a matter of gratification to me always to remember our delightful personal relations. Sincerely, yours,

WOODROW WILSON.

Hon. Robert Lansing, Secretary of State.

CONGRESSMAN MILLIGAN

Captain Milligan's majority of 1859 votes is a decisive victory won against the most bitter Republican opposition ever encountered here. Fair calculation indicates a Democratic gain of 474 votes since 1918. Total vote cast was 25,979. The full vote of the district is 40,000.

We are indeed proud of our congressman. He is a game fighter in politics as well as war, and possesses those characteristics peculiar to Missouri statesmanship, which are so highly treasured by our people.

Ministers from our leading pulpits took the stump in behalf of his candidacy, educators from both our religious and public schools volunteered their services, while laymen, regardless of political affiliation, rallied to his support.

The strong appeal of Mr. Bryan to our voters through his letter to the committee was given conspicuous publication and contributed greatly to the party's success.

Our citizens are rural native born, and are proud that our vote in congress has for many years been cast consistently for moral reform and progressive legislation.

The power of the young congressman's moral support is ample security against the destructive influence of any sinister forces which might otherwise imperil his future possibilities, and we predict for him a long, successful career.—Obie F. Davenport, Mercer, Mo., March 5, 1920.

WHY NOT TAX THEM?

A London cablegram, dated Feb. 24 says: Three hundred and forty thousand persons of this country made "fortunes" during the war, according to an inland revenue official, testifying today at a meeting of the House of Commons Select Committee on War Fortunes, which is debating whether this wealth should be especially taxed and, if so, how.

The evidence thus far given indicates that the committee's task will be most complex and difficult.